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SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

NEIL GAIMAN
MARC HEMPEL
RICHARD CASE

THE SANDMAN

THE KINDLY ONES

DIRECT SALES
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THERE.

THERE WE GO, YOUNG DANIEL. SO, WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING, EH? OFF HAVING LITTLE ADVENTURES?

WELL, I'VE BEEN SENT TO BRING YOU TO THE DREAMING. AND THAT'S *JUST* WHERE WE'RE GOING.

deeming?

THAT'S RIGHT. THERE WAS A BIRD HERE SOMEWHERE, ALTHOUGH HE SEEMS TO HAVE GOOFED OFF ON US. BUT DON'T WORRY.

WE'LL GIVE HIM A GOOD *TELLING-OFF*, EH?

YOU MIGHT AS WELL SHOW YOURSELF. I'VE GOT THE BOY, NOW.

HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT I WAS *HERE*?

YOU BREATHE TOO LOUDLY, LITTLE CREATURE.

WHAT MANNER OF THING ARE YOU, ANYWAY?

I AM THE *PUCK*, CALLED *ROBIN GOODFELLOW*. I AM A TRICKSTER, AN ANTIC PRANKSTER, A WILL O' THE WISP.

"THINGS FALL APART, THE CENTRE CANNOT HOLD, MERE ANARCHY IS LOOSE UPON THE WORLD."

THAT'S ME.

EX-JESTER TO THE KING OF FAERIE.

I AM KNOWN AS THE CORINTHIAN. WHY DID YOU STEAL THIS BOY?

NONE O' YOUR BEESWAX. I'VE STOL'N MANY A CHILD IN MY TIME, LEFT MANY A CHANGELING IN ITS CRIB TO STARE WITH OLD EYES FROM A BABY'S FACE.

WHO WERE YOU WORKING FOR? WHO TOLD YOU TO STEAL THE BOY?

I *COULD* ANSWER YOU ENDLESSLY, AND PERHAPS YOU *EXPECT* ME TO; BUT I LACK THE TIME AND THE INCLINATION, AND THUS I CHOOSE TO KEEP MY REASONS --AND MY PRINCIPALS --TO MYSELF.

YOU'VE *GOT* THE LADDIE NOW, AND A PRETTY CHILD HE IS TOO.

SO THE WOLF AND THE RAVEN ARE VERY PRETTY FOOLS WHEN THEY ARE YOUNG... EH?

MOUSE, MOUSE, GO BACK TO YOUR HOUSE, YOUR DAUGHTER'S A STRUMPET, AND SO IS YOUR SPOUSE.

WE BURNED AWAY *MOST* OF HIS MORTALITY, YOU KNOW.

NOT *ALL* OF IT.

BUT ANOTHER FEW DAYS, ANOTHER FEW FIRES, AND WE WOULD HAVE HAD IT ALL.

SO. DO WE *FIGHT* NOW, ROBIN GOODFELLOW?

A PUCK IS HARDER BY FAR TO HURT THAN SOME LITTLE LORD OF MALICE FROM THE LAND OF ICE AND SNOW. WE PUCKS ARE OLD AND HARD AND WILD...

BUT *NO*; I'LL LEAVE, I THINK, TAKE MY ADIEUS OF THIS DULL SPHERE.

I'LL RETURN TO FAERIE, PERHAPS. FOR A SHORT WHILE. VEX MY LORD AUBERON; PLAGUE MAB, MAEVE, TITANIA, OR ONE OF THE OTHER FACETS OF THE QUEEN...

CREATION IS MY PLAYGROUND, AFTER ALL.

pway?

IT WAS A DELIGHT TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE, MESSIRE THE CORINTHIAN. AND I SHALL RESTRAIN MYSELF FROM ENQUIRING WHETHER YOU TAKE YOUR NAME FROM THE LETTERS, THE PILLARS, THE LEATHER, THE PLACE, OR THE MODE OF BEHAVIOR...

YOU GAINED CONSCIOUSNESS TWO MINUTES BACK. YOUR BREATHING BETRAYS YOU TOO, LOKI.

KILL ME.

GIVE ME BACK MY EYES. OR KILL ME.

NO. I SHALL KEEP THE EYES, AND I SHALL LET YOU LIVE.

GOODNIGHT.

PLEASE... PLEASE, KILL ME...

HEH, LOKI SKY-WALKER. I LEFT ONE EYE WITH MIMIR THE BODILESS, TRADED IT FOR WISDOM. YOU'VE NOW LOST BOTH EYES, BUT I FEAR YOU HAVE HAD THE WORST OF THE BARGAIN.

GRIMNIR? BLOOD BROTHER? ...MY FRIEND?

YES, IT'S ME, LOKI MARE'S-MOTHER. PSSH... I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD HEAR A GOD OF ASGARD BEG FOR DEATH. WHAT KIND OF DEATH WOULD *THAT* BE?

NOT A WARRIOR'S DEATH, EH? BLINDED AND SHAMED.

A WEAKLING'S DEATH.

ODIN... THIS IS *NOT* WHAT IT APPEARS TO BE.

OH, SO?

I WAS... I WAS *STOL'N* FROM UNDER THE EARTH BY THE WEAVER OF DREAMS, AND TAKEN HERE, WHERE HE KEPT ME *'PRISONED*, SEEKING TO LEARN *YOUR* SECRETS, PROUD ODIN-- ALL THE SECRETS OF ASGARD, AND OF RAGNAROK.

EACH DAY HE WOULD TORTURE ME, EACH DAY WOULD HE THREATEN, EACH DAY I REFUSED TO BETRAY YOU.

FINALLY HE SENDED HIS CUTTHROAT, TO TEAR MINE EYES FROM MY HEAD, WOULD I NEVER REVEAL TO HIM THE SECRETS OF ODIN.

KILL ME, I SAID TO HIM. I WOULD PROUDLY DIE, RATHER THAN BETRAY A SINGLE CONFIDENCE.

HMPH. AND THAT'S THE *TRUTH* YOU TELL ME, LOKI? ANSWER ME *HONESTLY*. FOR IF THIS IS TRUE, THEN IT'S *WAR* BETWEEN ASGARD AND THE DREAMING.

TRUE AS I BREATHE.

THEN YOUR BREATHING MUST BE DIFFICULT INDEED, LOKI. FOR YOU LIE.

WE ARE TAKING YOU BACK TO UNDER THE EARTH. SHE'S *WAITING* FOR YOU, LOKI. THEY BOTH ARE. YOUR WOMAN AND YOUR PUNISHMENT.

THOR! PICK UP THIS PIECE OF SHIT.

CARRY IT. CAREFULLY, MIND.

PSST!.. YOUR WIFE, THOR. THE LADY *SIF*. SHE HAS A BIRTHMARK, HIGH ON THE INSIDE OF HER THIGH, IN THE SHAPE OF AN ANVIL.

HOW DO *YOU* KNOW THAT?

QUIET, BACK THERE! DO NOT *TALK* TO HIM, THOR.

SHE LET ME *LICK* IT. SHE LET ME DO FAR MORE THAN THAT. SHE WENT DOWN ON HER KNEES, AND SWORE TO BE MY SLAVE. SHE LET ME WHIP HER WITH A WHIP OF OILED LEATHER.

SHE LET ME EXPLORE EVERY CREVICE OF HER BODY. SHE LET ME *DO* THINGS SHE SWORE BLIND SHE HAD NEVER LET YOU DO TO HER. AND WHEN I WAS SATED, SHE *BEGGED* ME -- SHE *PLEADED* WITH ME TO COME BACK TO HER AND DO IT *AGAIN*...

I... I WILL *KILL* YOU, SMASH YOUR *SKULL* LIKE A *STONE*...

THOR! STOP IT!

BUT HE SAID--

HE *WANTS* YOU TO *KILL* HIM, THOR. HE WANTS TO *DIE*. HE WAS *LYING* TO YOU. HE *TELLS LIES*. YOU *KNOW* THAT.

HIS PUNISHMENT IS *WORSE* THAN DEATH. DEATH WOULD BE SO EASY.

PUT HIM DOWN, HERE.

I *BIND* YOU, LOKI SKY WALKER, MALICE-MONGER. I BIND YOU WITH THE GUTS OF NARVI, YOUR SON. I BIND YOU WITH FROST AND WITH FIRE, AND WITH THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD.

WOMAN. SIGYN LOKI'S-WIFE. HE TREATED YOU ILL. HE LEFT YOU HERE BENEATH THE EARTH WHILE HE WANDERED FREE.

HE LOST HIS EYES, AND HIS NECK HAS BEEN BROKEN. HE HAS DISGRACED HIMSELF.

YOU DO NOT *HAVE* TO STAY HERE. *LET* THE SNAKE DRIP ITS POISON INTO THE SOCKETS OF HIS EYES. LET HIM *TAKE* HIS PAIN. HE *DESERVES* IT.

VERY WELL. *SNAKE!* LET FLOW YOUR VENOM.

ODIN? HE NEVER TOUCHED HER, DID HE? MY SWEET SIF? HE NEVER DID THAT STUFF?

YOU *BELIEVED* HIS LIES, THOR? EVEN FOR A MOMENT?

HH. 'COURSE NOT.

O

O

DRIP

DRIP
DRIP
DRIP

AS THE FIRST DROPS OF POISON STRIKE LOKI'S FACE, BURNING THEIR WAY INTO THE EMPTY SOCKETS IN A FRENZIED EXPLOSION OF COLOR AND PAIN, HE BEGINS TO CURSE HER.

O

DRIP

HE DISSECTS HER WITH HIS WORDS, WHIPS HER WITH OBSCENITIES AND BRUISES HER WITH CURSES. SHE BEGINS TO CRY, SOFTLY, DEEP IN HER THROAT; THEN TEARS WELL UP AND BURN HER PALE EYES, WHICH SHE HAD IMAGINED FAR BEYOND TEARS. THE SALT-WARM DROPS FALL ON HER HUSBAND'S FACE, AND HE WINCES AT EACH DROP...

O

DRIP

EACH WORD IS LIKE A SLAP, A BLOW, A KICK, A BURN.

DRIP

AND SHE TAKES IT.

SLOWLY THE SILVER BOWL BEGINS TO FILL WITH POISON ONCE MORE. HE IS TIED, HE REALIZES, BY HIS CHILD; HE CANNOT LEAVE. HE WILL NOT LEAVE UNTIL THE WORLD ENDS...

I'M PLEASED YOU CAME BACK, MY LOVE, WHISPERS HIS WIFE.

...AND HE BEGINS TO LAUGH INANELY, HIGH AND WORDLESS.

HE TAKES A DEEP BREATH AND THEN, BROKEN-NECKED-HEAD LOLLING, EYESOCKETS BLOODIED AND HOLLOWED, HE BEGINS TO CURSE HER ONCE MORE.

O

O

O

DRIP

YUHYUHYUHYUH YOU CUHCAN'T KILL ME.

LITTLE FAT MAN. YOU SMELL LIKE POPCORN AND SWEAT. OF COURSE WE CAN KILL YOU.

YOU'RE THE FUHFURIES.

I NUHKNOW THE RULES. YOU DON'T KERKILL ANYONE. YOU DON'T HURT ANYONE, YOU FUHFIND SOMEONE WHO SPILLED FAMILY BLOOD, AND YOU DRIVE THEM TO SUICIDE OR TO RERERE-PENTANCE.

I NUHNEVER SPILLED FAMILY BLOOD. THAT WAS...

I MUHMEAN. YOU CAN'T KILL ME.

arwk?

WE CAN. IF WE WANT TO.

"YOU SCARCELY EXIST. YOU'RE A DREAM OF A GHOST OF A MEMORY OF SOMEONE WHO, ONE SUSPECTS, NEVER EXISTED IN THE FIRST PLACE. YOUR DEATH WILL HARDLY BE A REAL DEATH."

"NONE OF YOU ARE TRULY DEAD UNTIL MORPHEUS HIMSELF IS DEAD. ARE YOU?"

AND THIS WILL HARDLY BE YOUR FIRST DEATH, WILL IT?

YOU MUSTN'T KILL ME. YOU DON'T LOVE ME.

YOU D-DON'T EVEN KNOW ME.

THE KINDLY ONES 8:10

WRITTEN BY NEIL GAIMAN

DRAWN BY MARC HEMPEL

INKED BY RICHARD CASE

LETTERED BY TODD KLEIN
COLORED BY DANIEL VOZZO
EDITED BY KAREN BERGER
ASSOCIATED BY SHELLY ROEBERG

SANDMAN CHARACTERS CREATED BY GAIMAN, KIETH & DRINGENBERG

"FAERIE (WHICH IS A *PLACE*, BUT PERHAPS ALSO, I LIKE TO THINK, AN *ATTITUDE*) IS, LIKE *ALL* PLACES, INHABITED BY PEOPLE (A WORD I USE HERE IN ITS WIDEST POSSIBLE SENSE), GOVERNED *ONLY* BY RULES OF ETIQUETTE, BY FORMALITIES AND MODES OF BEHAVIOR: IN SHORT, BY *CUSTOM*."

CUSTOMS HAVE *POWER*, AND ONLY THE TRULY BRAVE, OR THE TRULY DANGEROUS, WILL *DEFY* THEM. ONE MUST *NOT* OFFEND AGAINST THE NOTIONS OF ONE'S NEIGHBORS.

BUT *CLURACAN*: WE ARE CREATURES OF ANARCHY AND MADNESS. *WE* ARE *THE WILD*. HOW CAN YOU *POSSIBLY* DESCRIBE US AS CREATURES OF CUSTOM?

LOOK YOU-- HERE AT OUR REVELS, SOME OF US GAVOTTE, OTHERS MINUET, OTHERS LURCH AND SPIN AND JIG.

THERE IS *NO* ORDER HERE, NO PATTERN, NO...CUSTOM.

SOME OF US ARE IN *RAGS*, SOME IN *TAGS*, SOME IN *VELVET GOWNS*. WHERE IS THE CONVENTIONAL HERE? I SEE NOTHING BUT *DIVERSITY*.

REALLY? I SEE NOTHING BUT DULL ROUTINE.

FRANKLY, MENTON, I WOULD FIND IT DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE *ANY* ACTION HERE THAT WOULD SO MUCH AS DRAW COMMENT. WERE THE QUEEN *HERSELF* TO PICK SOME WITLESS HUMAN FROM THE CROWD AND ANNOUNCE THAT SHE WAS TAKING HIM AS A LOVER--

THEN NO ONE WOULD BE THE *SLIGHTEST* BIT SHOCKED. OR EVEN SURPRISED.

WELL, *THERE'S* SOMETHING TO SURPRISE!

"THAT *CAN'T* BE *HIM*."

"OH, THAT'S *HIM*, ALL RIGHT. HE HASN'T CHANGED."

"HMPH. HE WAS NEVER HER PET BEFORE."

"NOR IS HE NOW."

SEE, CLURACAN. *THAT* WAS A WONDER.

SEE? WHAT AM I MEANT TO SEE? A PRODIGAL PUCK RETURNS AFTER THREE HUNDRED YEARS, AND *STILL* IT CAUSES NO MORE THAN RAISED EYEBROWS.

BY THE SILVER APPLES OF THE MOON--

WHAT HAS SHE DONE?

"WHO IN AVALON IS THAT?"

"THAT LITTLE ELF-THING. IS SHE INVITED TO THE QUEEN'S REVELS? SURELY NOT."

"WHO IS SHE? CLURACAN, DO YOU KNOW THAT CREATURE?"

"THAT IS MY SISTER, NUALA."

"BUT SHE HAS NO GLAMOUR ON HER! HOW DARE SHE APPEAR HERE, LIKE THAT. WHAT CAN SHE BE THINKING?"

NUALA. IS THIS A DELIBERATE INSULT?

UH, NO. NO, YOUR MAJESTY.

I GAVE THE MATTER A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF THOUGHT, AND DECIDED I FELT MOST COMFORTABLE WITHOUT. UM. GLAMOUR.

OF COURSE, SHE'S A DREAM OF A GIRL. GOOD-HEARTED, AND SHE'S FAMILY.

JUST MAKES IT MORE PAINFUL TO WATCH HER DIG HERSELF IN SO DEEP.

AH. SHE'LL TAKE BANISHMENT HARD, I'LL WAGER.

YOU...FELT... COMFORTABLE?

CLOTHE YOURSELF, NUALA. IMMEDIATELY.

BUT MAJESTY, I--

I DON'T--I, YOUR MAJESTY, I WILL NOT BE...

I...

OH.

MM. I SUPPOSE THAT'S BETTER.

BUT--YOUR MAJESTY--

NUALA!

WHAT MY SISTER WAS ABOUT TO SAY, MAJESTY, IS THAT SHE HAS WON OUR BET.

I, UH, I WAGERED NUALA THAT THERE WAS NOTHING SHE COULD DO NOR WEAR SO OUTRÉ AS TO CAUSE COMMENT AT OUR REVELS, AND SHE SWORE TO PROVE ME WRONG.

NUALA, YOU WITTY LITTLE MINX, UPSTAGING EVEN THE PUCK BY YOUR ENTRANCE...

SO THIS WAS YOUR FAULT, CLURACAN?

YOU'VE FOUND ME OUT? AYE ME. I SHALL TAKE MY BANISHMENT MANFULLY.

IF THE PUCK CAN VANISH FOR THREE CENTURIES, I AM SURE I CAN FIND SOMETHING TO KEEP ME OCCUPIED.

AND WHILE I THINK OF HIM, WHERE IS OUR MERRY WONDERER OF THE NIGHT?

AH! THERE YOU ARE, SIRRAH, SKULKING AND LURKING.

NOW, GOOD FELLOW -- SURELY THE TWO TOASTS OF OUR REVELS SHOULD TREAD A MEASURE TOGETHER? I MUST DISCUSS THE DETAILS OF MY IMPENDING PUNISHMENT WITH OUR MOST GRACIOUS QUEEN.

NOW, MAJESTY, BANISHMENT, DECAPITATION, OR SOMETHING LINGERING WITH BOILING OIL IN IT SOMEWHERE?

CLURACAN, YOU ARE A RASCAL...

MILADY? MAY I HAVE THE PLEASURE?

AS IF I HAVE A CHOICE? CERTAINLY I WILL DANCE WITH YOU, PUCK.

SO...YOU HAVE RETURNED TO FAERIE?

AYE, BUT NOT FOR LONG. IT *BORES* ME. VEXING NIXIES AND PESTERING BOGGARTS LACKS ANY SPICE.

WHY DO YOU TAKE SUCH *JOY* IN CONFUSION, ROBIN GOODFELLOW?

BECAUSE I AM TRUE TO MY NATURE, LADY NUALA.

HOW WAS YOUR SERVITUDE WITH THE LORD SHAPER?

IT WAS... EDUCATIONAL. THE LORD SHAPER IS... MOST SINGULAR.

A PALE AND PRISSY, POMPOUS, PREENING PRIG. A PRICK-ME-DAINTY POPINJAY. A PIG.

THE LORD SHAPER IS *NONE* OF THOSE THINGS.

WAS NONE OF THOSE THINGS.

WAS?

MORE OR LESS, LADY. WE SET THE FURIES AROUND HIS EARS, MY ASSOCIATE AND I. IF HE IS NOT YET GONE, HE WILL BE SOON.

THERE. IS THAT NOT *FINE* REVENGE FOR TAKING A FAIRY LADY AS HIS SCULLERY MAID?

YOU *HURT* HIM... FOR *ME*?

NO. I CARE *NOTHING* FOR YOU. NOT ONE *FIG* NOR *JOT* NOR *TITTLE*. I DID IT BECAUSE... IT *AMUSED* ME.

HM. YOUR OAFISH BROTHER HAS MOLLIFIED YOUR QUEEN, I SEE.

MY BROTHER -- WHO IS NO OAF -- COULD MOLLIFY A MINOTAUR.

YOU WERE WEARING YOUR TRUE SHAPE. IS THAT BECAUSE THE LATE DREAM KING *LIKED* IT?

...YOU ARE SIMPLY TRYING TO UPSET ME...

NOTHING COULD HURT MY LORD SHAPER. YOU HAVE LOST YOUR TALENT TO VEX IN THREE CENTURIES, PUCK.

AND *YOU* ARE A *VERY* STUPID CREATURE.

I *SWEAR* ON MY *NAME*. SOON HE WILL BE REMEMBERED ONLY BY ANTIQUARIES. BUT THEN, WE ARE *ALL* IMPROVED BY THE GLOW OF MEMORY.

"WHERE IS THE LADY NUALA GOING?"

"A MURDER OF RAVENS HAUNTS THE DREAMING: SLOW WINGS FLAPPING BLEAKLY LIKE SHADOWS OR OLD MEN STUMBLING, BATTLE-BIRDS, DARK DWELLERS IN THE AFTERMATH."

"WE CROAK OUR RAVEN SECRETS, EACH TO EACH, SHARE OUR GRIM JOY AND SHARE OUR HISTORIES, AS HIDDEN KINGS, LOST GODS, DARK THOUGHTS, BEADED EYES, RIDING COLD WINDS AND STORMS."

UNSATISFIED, WE PICK AT RANDOM CORPSES. CREATURES OF DEATH, CERTAIN OF FEASTS TO COME, OF CARRION: THE SPOILS OF THE NIGHT.

A MURDER OF RAVENS: DARK--

--HERALDS OF MISFORTUNE...

THPLAT!

KAAR!

YAGETTOUTTAHERE! GWAN! SHOO!

JESUS. AND I THOUGHT THE BOSS'S BIRDS WAS BAD. AT LEAST NONE OF THEM THOUGHT THEY WAS POETS.

YEAH, YEAH. POINT TAKEN. EXCEPT WHATSISNAME.

OKAY. ARISTEAS OF MARMORA. LIKE I GIVE A TOSS. SO NOW THAT THE BEAK'S OUTTA THE WAY, IF I C'N HAVE YOUR ATTENTION...?

LOOK. SOMEBODY'S GOTTA DO SOMETHIN' ABOUT THIS, RIGHT? I MEAN, IF WE LEAVE EVERYTHIN' TO HIS HIGH-AND-MIGHTINESS THEN WE MIGHT AS WELL JUST PUT UP A SIGN SAYIN' "SHOW'S OVER," AND GO HOME!

KHOFF! KHOFF!

RIGHT? OF COURSE RIGHT.

USMC

YOU GUYS'RE AN ELITE CORPS. KHOFF!

THEY SAY I'M HARD AND I AM HARD. THEY SAY I'M A BASTARD, AND I'LL TELL YOU WHAT. I AM A BASTARD. A HARD, TOUGH BASTARD. A TOUGH, HARD BASTARD WITH A PUMPKIN FOR A HEAD.

BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN I CAN'T BE PROUDA YOU DUMB LUGS.

AND I AM PROUD OF YOU. ALLA YOU--WYCZIEZBSKY, O'BRIEN, McTAVISH, SILVERSTEIN, PUCCI, AND THE LITTLE NORWEGIAN.

WHILE SOME GUYS HAVE SKEDADDLED, AND OTHERS HAVE BOLTED INTO THE CASTLE, WE'RE THE JOES THAT HAVE FACED THE FACTS.

AND THE FACTS ARE THIS. IS THIS. ARE... WHATEVER.

KHOFF KHOFF

WE'RE AT WAR.

KLINK

DANGER

WARNING

ABUDAH? YOU BRUNG THE ARTILLERY?

AYUH.

WARNING

DANGER

NOW, LET'S GET OUT THERE. WE'RE DOING IT FOR THE DREAMIN'.

WE'RE DOING IT FOR THE BOSS.

LET'S GO!

:KHOFF KHOFF KHOFF...:

GAARRR.

HEY! I CAN SEE YOU.

THROW DOWN YOUR WEAPONS. JUST SURRENDER PEACEFULLY AND NO ONE'LL GET HURT.

YOU? WHAT ARE YOU?

ME? LADY, I'M YOUR *WORST NIGHTMARE*-- A PUMPKIN WITH A GUN.

WE *HAVE* NO NIGHTMARES.

WE ARE THE HOUNDS OF HADES.

GODS FEAR US. DEMONS FEAR US. WE HAVE HOUNDED KINGS AND ANGELS. WE HAVE TAKEN VENGEANCE ON WORLDS AND ON UNIVERSES.

WE ARE THE KINDLY ONES. WE ARE THE EUMENIDES.

YEAH? WELL, EUMENIDES *THIS!*

BUDDABUDDABUDDABUDDA!

MERVYN'S DEAD.

Yes.

HOW... HOW *DARE* YOU LET THAT HAPPEN, LORD? *HOW DARE YOU?*

You will not speak to me like that, Lucien.

I DOUBT I'LL BE ALIVE TOMORROW, LORD. ON THAT BASIS I FIND IT PARTICULARLY EASY TO SAY *EXACTLY* WHAT I THINK...

I CANNOT BE*LIEVE* THAT YOU COULD LET *HIM* --OF ALL PEOPLE... MERVYN WAS A FINE SOUL...

"He is far from the only one."

"HE *DIDN'T* DESERVE IT."

"...none of you deserve it."

YOU CAN'T JUST *SIT* HERE WHILE THEY HURT US, TO HURT YOU.

WHY AREN'T YOU RESTORING THE THINGS THEY DESTROY?

SO ARE YOU GOING TO *LET* THEM KILL US ALL? ARE YOU GOING TO LET THEM PULL THE DREAMING DOWN AROUND YOUR EARS?

They will not leave until I am destroyed, by my own hand or another's.

I... I knew what I was going to do, Lucien. I was going to remove the mortal woman Lyta Hall. She is what powers this aspect of the Furies.

That proved... impractical.

AND *NOW,* LORD?

Now, I am... considering.

WHERE IS THE LADY NUALA GOING? THE LADY NUALA IS GOING TO WALK IN THE WOOD BETWEEN THE WORLDS.

AND WHY IS THAT? BECAUSE THE LADY NUALA IS SICK OF FAERIE, AND THE LADY NUALA LACKS THE AUTHORITY TO LEAVE THE DAMNED PLACE.

SO THE LADY NUALA IS MAKING THE BEST OF UN-WELCOME CIRCUM-STANCES, WHICH IS, IN AN EGGSHELL, THE STORY OF LADY NUALA'S LIFE SO FAR.

And to whom would the lady Nuala be talking?

LEAVE ME BE, BOGGART.

hrp'hem-- let's see...

You crippled you with pain and lies You're hurting all the time; and elf, You built your prison cell yourself then schemed and dreamed of open skies--

GO...AWAY...YOU ARE A NASTY, LYING LITTLE BOGGART. IF YOU DO NOT GO, THEN I WILL HURT YOU. VERY, VERY BADLY.

But lady...

NOW!

:snf.:

:snf.:

YOU CUT IT.

OF COURSE I CUT IT.

BUT HE'S STILL THERE, ISN'T HE, MY PIGSNEY?

HMMM. SOMETIMES IT TAKES THEM A LITTLE WHILE TO NOTICE...

ATROPOS? IS THERE SOMETHING YOU AREN'T TELLING US?

I DON'T KNOW.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YOU DON'T KNOW?

HELLO.

HELLO.

WE'RE LOOKING FOR MY DOGGIE.

THAT'S NICE.

SO FAR WE'VE FOUND LOTS OF CLUES. HERE'S A LITTLE SWAN MADE OF ICE...

AND A TOFFEE...AND A TONGUE-STUD.

AND A WORD THAT MEANS RED OR GREEN AT THE SAME TIME.

OH. THIS IS THE BORGHAL RANTIPOLE. BORGHAL RANTIPOLE, THIS IS A LADY I DON'T KNOW EITHER.

MY NAME IS NUALA, AN' IT PLEASES YOU.

CHARMED.

MY LADY DELIRIUM -- WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR BROTHER, THE LORD SHAPER?

UHN. STUFF? THINGS? ODDMENTS?

I... WAS TOLD TODAY THAT HE WAS IN GREAT TROUBLE. IS THAT TRUE?

...HE IS IN TROUBLE.

ISN'T THERE ANYTHING YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT?

I DON'T KNOW... I TRIED TO MAKE HIM COME WITH ME, AND LOOK FOR MY DOGGIE. BUT HE GAVE ME THE BORGHAL RANTIPOLE INSTEAD, TO HELP.

I COULDN'T GET HIM TO LEAVE THE DREAMING. I DID TRY.

YOU... HAVEN'T SEEN A DOGGIE HERE, ANYWHERE?

HE--HE'S BLACK AND BROWN AT THE SAME TIME. HE'S A NICE SORT OF DOGGIE EXCEPT WHEN HE'S GRUMPY.

NO...

BUT...

UM,

WELL...

WHERE DID YOU LEAVE IT?

THAT IS SO EXTREMELY CLEVER. I NEVER THOUGHT OF THAT. THANK YOU, PRETTY FAIRY. I THINK YOU MUST BE MY GOOD FAIRY.

...I WISH I COULD GIVE YOU A PRESENT.

DO YOU NEED A WORD THAT MEANS RED AND GREEN AT THE SAME TIME?

NO THANK YOU.

YOU... DON'T WANT A PRESENT?

I ALREADY HAVE ONE.

"YOU GOING HOME, THEN?"

"YUP."

"WERE YOU IN ENGLAND ON HOLIDAY?"

"NOT REALLY. *KIND* OF."

"I'M GOING TO *AMERICA* ON HOLIDAY. I'VE GOT A PEN PAL."

I HAD AN *AUNT* WHO WENT TO AMERICA, BEFORE THE *WAR*. SHE USED TO SEND US PICTURE POSTCARDS, WHEN WE WERE LITTLE. MY DAD SAID SHE WAS NO BETTER THAN SHE SHOULD HAVE BEEN.

THAT'S MY DAD FOR YOU. WELL, HE'S DEAD NOW, OF COURSE.

WHAT'RE *YOU* READING? I'M READING *PRINCESS DAISY*. IT'S LOVELY.

IT'S CALLED *HERE COMES A CANDLE*. IT'S A NOVEL BY SOME DEAD WHITE MALE.

A FRIEND I MET GAVE IT TO ME TO READ ON THE PLANE. I HAVE TO SEND IT BACK WHEN I'VE FINISHED IT. IT'S BEEN OUT OF PRINT FOR YEARS.

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

IT'S ABOUT AN ARTIST WHO DREAMS OF A WOMAN.

AND ONE DAY HE *MEETS* THE WOMAN HE'S BEEN DREAMING OF, SO HE LOCKS HER UP IN HIS CELLAR, WHICH HE MAKES INTO A KIND OF COZY CELL. AND EVERY NIGHT HE GOES DOWN AT MIDNIGHT AND HE *STARES* AT HER THROUGH THE BARS AND SHE TELLS HIM WHAT TO PAINT...

IT SOUNDS A WEE BIT... RACY.

NOT REALLY. I MEAN, I *THINK* THEY'RE SCREWING, BUT IT WAS WRITTEN BACK IN THE DAWN OF TIME, SO THEY DO IT IN ROWS OF ASTERISKS, OR BETWEEN CHAPTERS.

OH.

ACTUALLY, IT'S A PRETTY GOOD BOOK. I'VE NEVER HEARD OF THE AUTHOR. HE'S KIND OF A CROSS BETWEEN ROBERT AICKMAN AND I DUNNO... SHIRLEY JACKSON, MAYBE, IN HER *WE HAVE ALWAYS LIVED IN THE CASTLE* MODE.

YOU KNOW SHIRLEY JACKSON?

UM. NOT REALLY.

I'M MAKING A LIST OF WORDS TO LOOK UP WHEN I GET HOME TO MY DICTIONARY.

SINOPLE. LUSK. BLOATER.

WELL, A BLOATER'S LIKE A KIPPER, REALLY. YOU KNOW, A SMOKED HERRING. LIKE YOU HAVE FOR BREAKFAST.

NOT ME. I'M MORE OF A CORNFLAKES GIRL, MYSELF.

HEY... I DON'T KNOW YOUR NAME.

CELIA. CELIA CRIPPS.

I'M ROSE. HI.

CELIA... WHEN *YOU* WERE A LITTLE KID. DID YOU EVER FOLLOW YOUR PARENTS AROUND, LIKE DOWN TO THE MALL OR SOMETHING, AND YOU'RE FOLLOWING YOUR MOM, AND THEN SHE TURNS AROUND, AND YOU REALIZE IT'S *NOT* YOUR MOM.

IT'S LIKE SOME *OTHER* WOMAN WITH THE SAME GREEN DRESS.

sinople lusk bloater

DID *THAT* EVER HAPPEN TO *YOU*?

ONCE. FOLLOWING MY DAD AROUND MARKS AND SPARKS IN CRAWLEY. *WHY?*

I DON'T KNOW. BECAUSE THAT'S HOW MY VISIT TO ENGLAND FELT, I SUPPOSE.

LIKE I WAS WAITING FOR THE LADY IN THE GREEN DRESS TO TURN AROUND.

THAT'S WHY I LIKE JUDITH KRANTZ, REALLY. YOU DON'T HAVE TO LOOK UP ANY WORDS WITH JUDITH KRANTZ.

LORD MORPHEUS... LORD SHAPER? HELLO?

THIS IS ME, NUALA THE ELF. I DON'T KNOW IF YOU REMEMBER ME. I MEAN, I'M SURE YOU DO REMEMBER ME, BUT NOW I LOOK LIKE I DID WHEN YOU FIRST MET ME, NOT LIKE I LOOKED WHEN YOU KNEW ME, AND I'D TAKE IT OFF, EXCEPT MY BROTHER PUT IT ON, AND SO HE'LL HAVE TO TAKE IT OFF...

I *WORKED* FOR YOU, FOR A WHILE.

WHEN I *LEFT* YOUR SERVICE, YOU DID ME THE FAVOR OF CONFERRING A GIFT UPON ME.

YOU SAID THAT I COULD *CALL* YOU. AND YOU'D *COME*. AND I COULD HAVE A BOON.

SO HERE AND NOW, DO I CALL YOU, LORD SHAPER.

Nuala?

YES, LORD.

I am no longer your lord.

NO, LORD. OF *COURSE* YOU AREN'T. I'M SORRY.

This is exceedingly inconvenient, Nuala.

Can we not postpone it to another time?

NO, MY LORD. WE *CAN*NOT.

My Lady Nuala, I must most earnestly beseech you...

"IF IN NEED, HOLD THE STONE WITH BOTH HANDS, AND CALL ME. I WILL COME TO YOU; YOU MAY HAVE ONE BOON."

MY LORD?

You do me a disservice, Nuala.

PLEASE, MY LORD?

I am here, Nuala.

WELCOME TO THE DWELLING, LORD SHAPER. CAN I OFFER YOU *WINE?* OR *PASTRIES?* IF YOU ATE FLOWERS, I WOULD OFFER YOU FLOWERS.

No Wine. No pastries. And I do not eat flowers. State your boon and I will grant it.

MY LORD... THE *PUCK* TELLS ME THAT THE *DIRAE* ARE SET AGAINST YOU. HE SAYS YOU ARE IN *TROUBLE.*

The Puck says many things.

THE LADY DELIRIUM, YOUR SISTER, WORRIES ABOUT YOU.

The Lady Delirium, while she has many fine features, also says many things.

ARE YOU IN TROUBLE?

Yes. I suppose that I am.

However, as long as I remain in the Dreaming, no real harm can occur.

MY LORD...

YOU ARE NO LONGER IN THE DREAMING.

No.

I am not.

TO BE CONTINUED...

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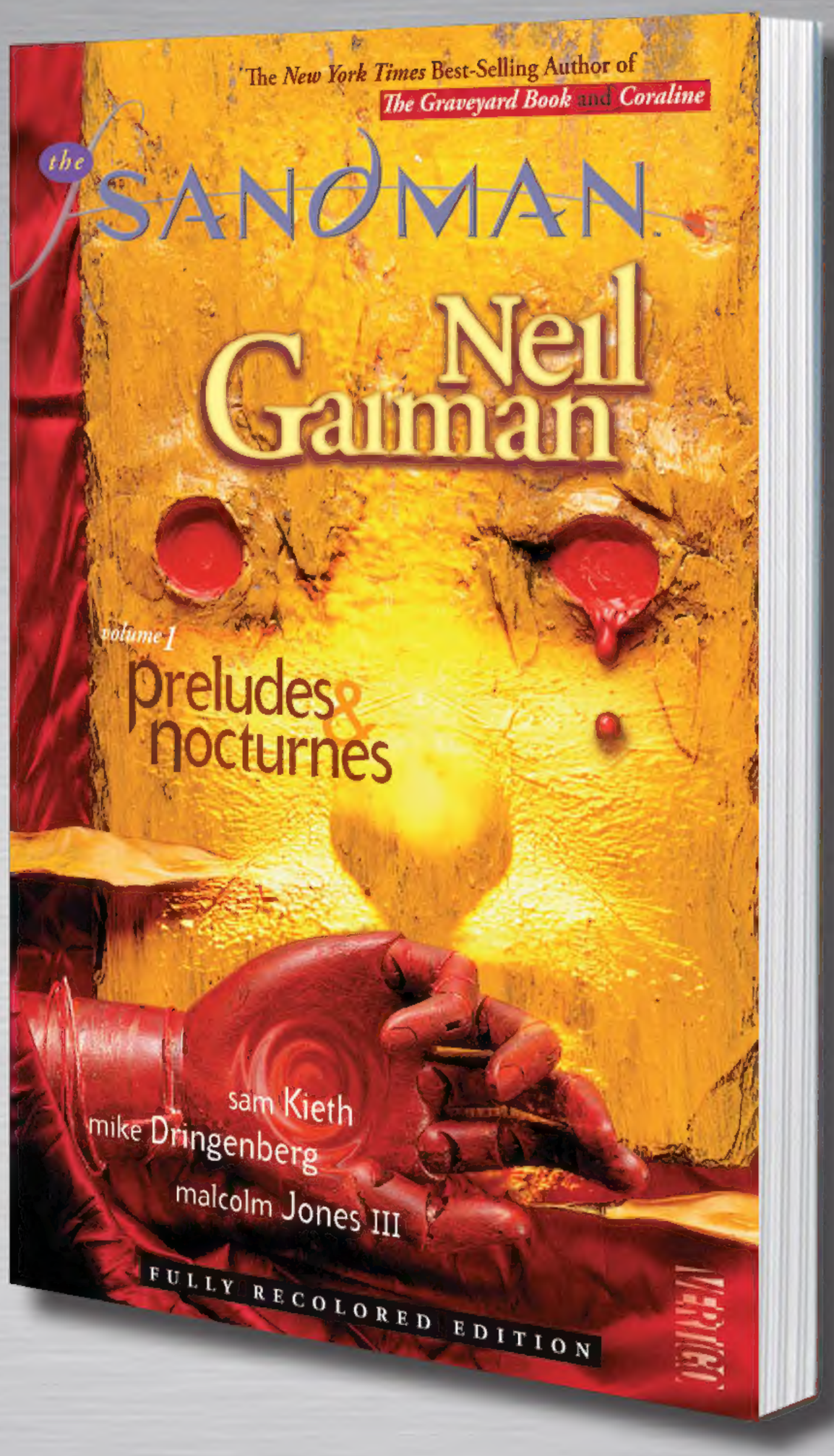

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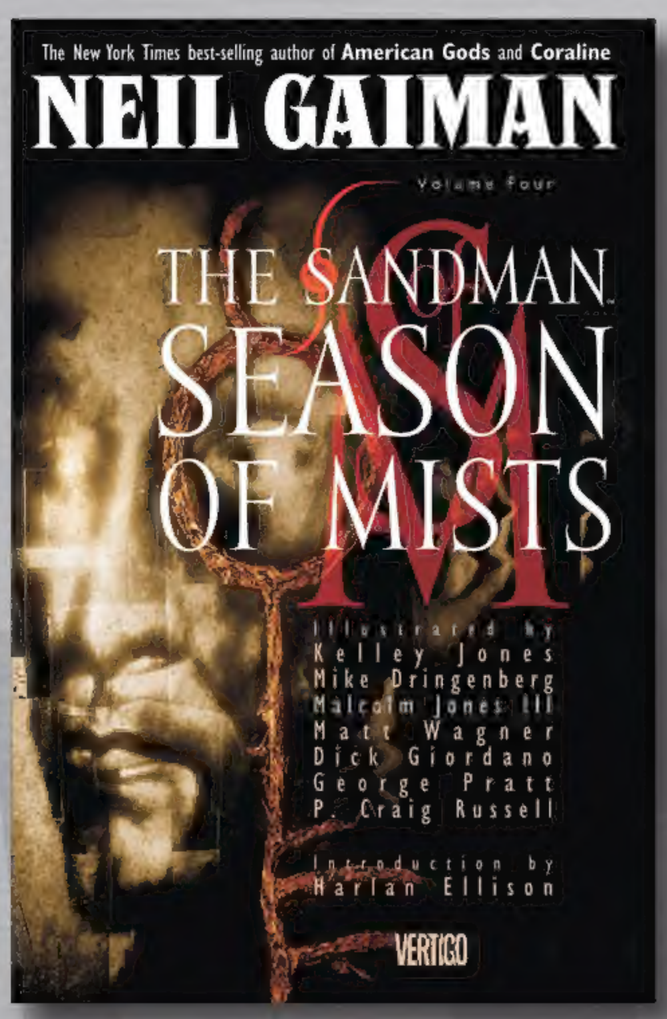

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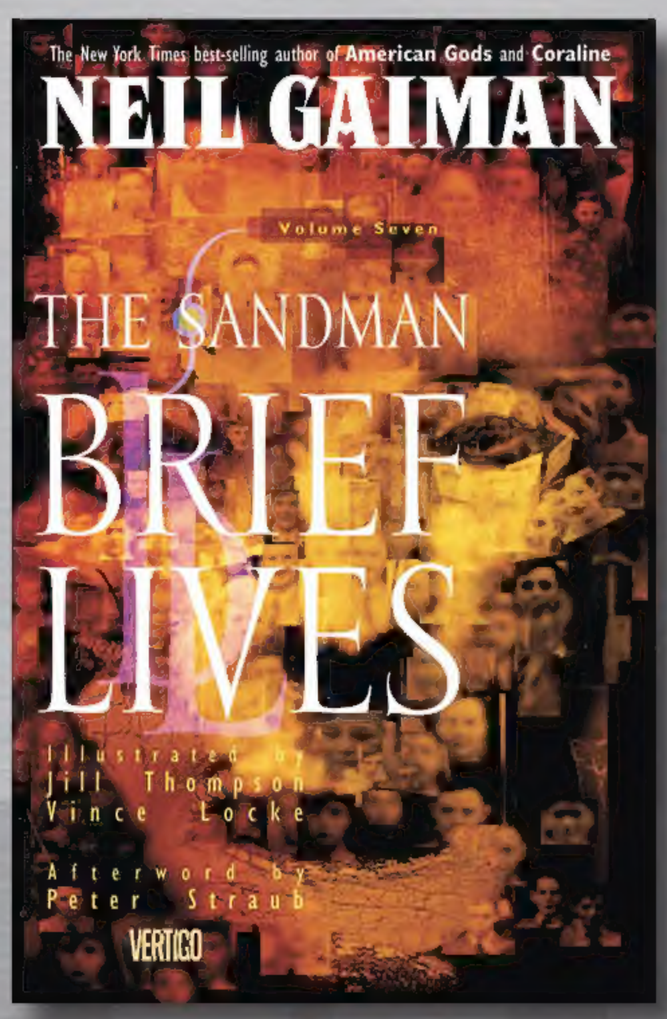

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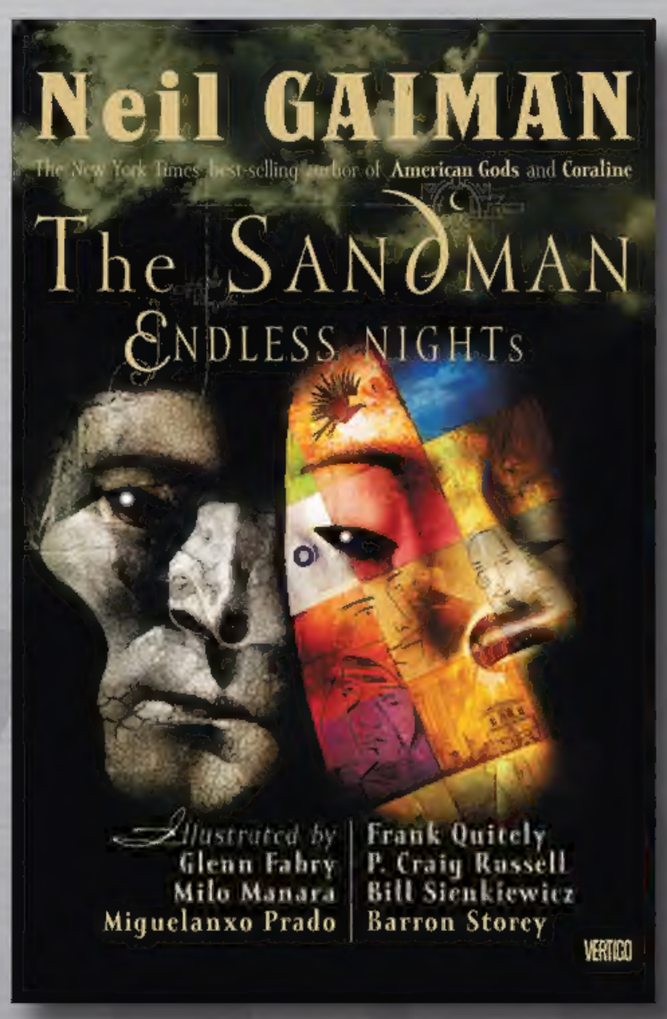

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